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# Shatila: The island of (in)stability

by  
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**THE** Shatila refugee camp was established in 1949 for Palestinian refugees fleeing Palestine during the Nakba. The camp is located in Beirut next to the Sabra neighbourhood (of the Gaza buildings discussed in the foregoing article). Shatila was severely devastated during the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon, and repeatedly targeted during the Lebanese civil war. On 16-18 September 1982, between 700 and 3500 residents were massacred in the camp and the Sabra neighborhood – predominantly Palestinian residents.

Bjørnar Haveland (BA U. Michigan), MA (BAS, Bergen) is a Bergen-based architect with a special interest in how the built environment affects human rights. As Raul Wallenberg '15 fellow at the University of Michigan he spent a year (2015-16) in the Shatila refugee camp in Beirut, Lebanon, conducting a study combining urban and architectural mapping with anthropological research methodologies to understand connections between the built environment and identity in protracted camps. Haveland now works at Kaleidoscope Nordic and is the leader of Byrop.

Initially comprising some 500 tents erected by the International Committee of the Red Cross as a temporary refuge, the camp has grown tremendously over the past decades. The camp has seen a predominantly vertical growth with units added on top of each other without either foundation or structures to support the building heights. The recurrent targeting and destruction of the camp has resulted in the extensive dilapidation of the housing and infrastructure the area is characterized by today. While there are just over 10,000 Palestinian refugees registered to the camp today estimates of the number of residents range from 20,000 to 30,000 people.

In his master thesis *The Island of (in)stability*, or a hotel for visiting foreigners in the middle of town (2019), Haveland created an imaginary aid project; a hotel for journalists and researchers funding the camp infrastructure, used as a narrative tool to provoke as well as highlight aspects of Shatila's politics and criticize the roles of western aid, NGOs and researchers.

Illustration: Section drawing through Shatila's built environment based on a composite of map data, typology studies and a wide sample of apartment interiors.

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